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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT BUSH'S IRAQ SECURITY PLAN

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to give extensive reporting and editorial coverage January 12 to the alleged violation of securities transaction regulations of the Rebar Asia Pacific Group. News coverage also focused on President Chen Shui-bian's trip to Nicaragua and the trial operations of Taiwan's high-speed railway system. The Chinese-language papers only gave limited coverage to President George W. Bush's Iraq security plan. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, ran a banner headline on page five that said "Bian Enjoys High Visibility and Has an In-depth Talk with U.S. Envoy at the Inauguration Ceremony of Nicaraguan President."

22. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" called President Bush's Iraq policy a wild gamble, saying "he is using the United States' future as his stake." A column in the pro-status quo "China Times" said there is nothing new in President Bush's new strategy on Iraq and that "(t)he Iraq issue can no longer be solved by using stopgap measures or applying palliative remedies." End summary.

A) "Bush's Wild Gambling"

Columnist Antonio Chiang noted in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (1/12):

"... Bush's idea of sending 20,000 more U.S. troops to Iraq will definitely draw severe criticism. But the consequences will be very serious if [the United States] withdraws its troops before it even seeks to stabilize the situation [in Iraq]. Bush actually has his reasons for sending in more troops before withdrawing them. If [Washington] withdraws its troops now, not only will Iraq be devastated by a civil war, creating more pain and suffering, but Iran will also surely emerge big and strong; he Israel-Palestine crisis might get out of control; and Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia would be caught in a panic. [Should this happen], the United States will lose its prestige, and its international status will nose-dive as well.

"The Democratic Party condemned [Bush's] Iraq policy as worthless, but it also failed to come up with a viable alternative. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is [now] viewed as the prime

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culprit responsible [for the worsening situation in Iraq]. But Rumsfeld's military strategy used to be very successful. The question lies in the fact that the United States only knows how to win a war, but it has no idea how to occupy a country, let alone build democracy in other countries. ... In the days when France was scrambling for spheres of influence in the Middle East, the Americans' sole interest in the region was oil. Now Europe is concerned about nothing but oil, and the Americans want to take the Middle East into its sphere of influence. Now is already too late [for Washington] to have regrets. The Iraq issue is the key

indicator of the United States' decline from prosperity. Bush is engaged in unrestrained gambling with high stakes, and he is using the United States' future as his stake."

B) "Such a New Strategy on Iraq"

The "International Outlook" column in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] commented (1/12):

"There is actually nothing new in President Bush's new strategy on Iraq. If he pursues his policy, he will face a bigger failure. The Iraq issue can no longer be solved by using stopgap measures or applying palliative remedies. ... The Iraq issue is no longer a military issue now. The war in Iraq has destroyed the country's social structure and economic development, and its originally barely satisfactory society is now full of hatred and confrontation. Iraq's economy, which used to be abundant in resources, was hit by the decline of its oil industry and unexpected interference of foreign forces, whereas its neighboring countries each harbor sinister schemes. When Iraq is suffering from severe tribal conflicts, unemployment, and nationwide hunger, will the addition 21,500 U.S. soldiers and USD1.2 billion worth of economic aid be able to solve its problems? ..."

YOUNG